

Her Homestead Now La Grande



Mrs. Lydia Grandy, pictured above, has watched modern La Grande grow from nothing to a modern city. Before the railroad brought the business section from the hill to the flat, the Grandy homestead was the only habitation here. The old Grandy home stood at Adams and Fourth, and was removed within the last decade to make room for the building of the La Grande hotel.

MILLING OF FLOUR THE OLDEST INDUSTRY HERE

The oldest industry in Union county, and one that was started 21 years before the coming of the railroad, is that of milling of flour. The first flour mill of which there was any record was built in La Grande by John Wilkinson in the year 1863. It was a one-run stone mill, using steam to supply the power, and was located in Mill Creek canyon above La Grande. This mill could grind out about 10 barrels of flour a day. The mill later was sold to Mr. Crandall, of Old Town, who operated it for several years. John Caviness sold the first crop of wheat he raised in this valley to the Wilkinson mill, receiving \$1.50 a bushel.

In 1864 the father of the late W. T. Wright built another small stone burr mill at Union, which he operated for several years, but finally it was destroyed by fire. About this time James Rinehart also built a water-power stone burr mill at Summerville, which was operated until about the time the railroad came, when it was remodeled and converted into a roller process mill.

Not long after the Rinehart mill was built Huhl and Martin erected another stone mill at Summerville, later disposing of it to George and Robert Ruckman, who remodeled it into a roller mill. About 1865, Oids and Harker built a small water-power mill at Oro Dell, which later they sold to Snodgrass and Minor. It was operated under this management for several years until it was caught by a flood of the Grande Ronde river and washed out. The first mill at Cove was built in 1870 by Henry and French, and later sold to Jaycox. The next year, 1871, John Caviness and Sterling built a water-power mill at Island City on the same site that the present mill,

the Pioneering Flouring Mill now stands. In 1896 the Island City Mercantile and Milling company sold out to the Pioneer Flour Mill Co., with Ed Kiddie as president and manager, W. G. Hunter as vice president, and C. H. Bivwell as secretary. This was the parent company from which the present system of Kiddie mills and warehouses in the Grande Ronde valley was established.

RIDE OVER BLUE MT. IN '82 TOOK DAY

Back in 1882, two years before the U. P. railroad came into the Grande Ronde valley, it was an all night stage ride to cross over the Blue mountains from Pendleton to La Grande. "A dark and lonesome trip" as D. H. Stearns recalls it in a booklet published that year. "In the middle of the night we changed horses at 'Mencham's' or Lee's Encampment, as it is sometimes called. The station is probably the oldest building now inhabited in all of Eastern Oregon. It is built of great pine logs, hewn square, and has some 30 rooms, all partitioned with great walls of hewn logs. Two immense chimneys flank the gables after the Virginia fashion."

Stearns rode across the mountains in a stage driven by George Carroll, described by Stearns as "one of the real overland sort, ready to amuse his passenger with anecdote of fact and fiction." Describing his ride, he said: "Later, I had the pleasure of crossing these mountains in the

daytime and by private conveyance. It is doubtful if another road of equal length in America passes through so delightful a variety of mountain scenery."

ORO DELL A FINE TOWN IN YEAR '82

Oro Dell, once a thriving village a mile west of La Grande, faded away following the coming of the railroad to Eastern Oregon half a century ago. But in 1882, two years previous to the arrival of the first passenger train, it was a thriving little village with one store, a flouring mill and sawmill, a blacksmith shop, eating house and a saloon. The mills and store and the largest number of the houses belonged to W. J. Snodgrass.

Back in 1882 it was predicted that when the railroad was completed, it would give Oro Dell a new start, which will doubtless result in its becoming the chief town in the county.

JACOB NIBLER ONE OF THE FIRST SHOP WORKMEN HERE

"I was up on that hill logging with an ox team when that first train came through here," said Jacob Nibler, who later became one of the first men employed in the shops after they were located in La Grande. "I went to work in the shops on August first, 1885 and was retired in 1928," Mr. Nibler related.

Mr. Nibler also stated that he and H. N. Webber, the first shop foreman, worked in the first shops, and he (Mr. Nibler) hung all the machinery in the shops which was used in the beginning of its operation here. His first job was that of "wiper" and he held various positions until finally he became foreman.

In speaking of the hardships and harrowing experiences of the early railroaders, he stated that from actual account which he kept of his work, during January of 1882 he slept in his own bed just exactly six hours of the

entire month. The remainder of the time was spent on wrecking trains going out after wrecks, picking them up, repairing the wreckage, etc. He stated that wrecks were not only the usual occurrence, but were expected almost every day, and the unusual thing was not to have a wreck during a single day at some point at or near La Grande.

At the time of his retirement in 1928, Mr. Nibler was foreman of the shops, which position he had held for several years. He now makes his home on East Adams where he has lived since his retirement.

WORKING ON WATER SYSTEM Work on the new water system in La Grande is progressing rather slowly, owing chiefly to the non-arrival of the remainder of the pipe. At the reservoir all is now ready for the water. — La Grande Gazette, Sept. 23, 1892.



We Were Not Here In the Old Days--

But we would have enjoyed being here in those happy days following the coming of the railroad. In our opinion, those must have been great times and we envy all those who were here and congratulate them upon the real service they performed in building this fine city.

We're Trying To Do Our Part Now

In the past eight years since establishing our business here we believe we may modestly say that we have contributed in some measure toward the better development of La Grande and surrounding territory. Our firm, though not early established in this particular community, has for the past 25 years participated in and seen much of the great growth of this part of the country.

With Recent Improvements at Our Yards—

—and our large buying facilities, this company has a most complete service for builders and one of the largest stocks this side of Portland.

All grades of LUMBER, MILLWORK, SASH & DOORS, SHINGLES, BRICK, LIME, CEMENT, Etc.

In addition we stock adequate supplies of BUILDERS HARDWARE, PAINTS and VARNISHES, and are in position to give attractive quotations on every line.

KEMMERER COAL

VAN PETTEN LBR. CO. Across the Tracks on Greenwood Ave.

We cordially extend an invitation to one and all to attend the Semi-Centennial

CELEBRATION JULY 19-20-21

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"We Grow With La Grande"